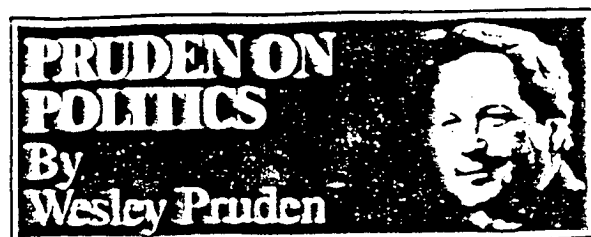


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## A mighty crusade for big doughnuts

Isn't that good old Pol Pot leading the cavalry to the rescue of the liberal Democrats?

Stephen J. Solarz thinks so, and he may be speaking for the timid majority in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Solarz, who represents a district in New York City, is the chairman of a subcommittee on Asian and Pacific matters, and one of the Democrats who so righteously trashed President Reagan's "vast" \$14 million aid for the Nicaraguan resistance because the resistance fighters do not measure up to the high moral tone Democratic congressmen are accustomed to.

Then Daniel Ortega, the president of the Marxist government in Managua, flew off to Moscow with his Christmas stocking.

Like most of his colleagues, Mr. Solarz has been taking heat. That's why Tip O'Neill and his friends have been trying so desperately to get Daniel Ortega to rearrange his travel itinerary to make a stop in Western Europe — Portugal, San Marino, Monaco, Majorca, the Canary Islands, any of the world powers will do.

That's why nearly every member of the House is trying to float a revived resistance-aid plan. Suddenly there's a concerned liberal Democrat under every foot in the House — an aid "plan" for every banana in Nicaragua.

The Democrats, particularly the leadership, still don't want to help the resistance. But suddenly they're all panting to look like they do.

Only yesterday the House Intelligence Committee voted — by 10 to 6, in a straight party vote — to kill a bill to send \$28 million worth of military help to the resistance. Then it voted, by a similar 9 to 7 vote, not to send even humanitarian aid — doughnuts to be passed out by the Red Cross.

"They're going to use points of order, anything to block reconsideration," says Bob Livingston of Louisiana, a Republican who wrote the hot-doughnut bill that failed yesterday.

The idea, clearly, is to keep the issue from coming to a vote for as long as possible. If action can be stalled long enough, another outrage will soon divert public attention. Outrage over the sellout of the Nicaraguan resistance will be successfully diffused before real harm is done to the fortunes of the liberal Democrats.

And if the liberal Democrats can find a place far away where idealism is being brutalized, public sympathies can be pointed in that direction. The cries and desperate whispers in the Nicaraguan countryside can be muffled by noisy expressions of solicitude for victims far away.

So here's Pol Pot; just when Stephen Solarz and his Democratic colleagues need him. Mr. Solarz wants American compassion, like Lucky Strike Green, to go to war.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Solarz notes in an essay in *The Washington Post*, "with overwhelming bipartisan support [note the subtle suggestion of a Guadalcanal-like storming of the beaches] recently voted to provide \$5 million in military assistance to the two noncommunist resistance forces in Cambodia." Wow.

This is a cause, of course, that many good men support. But the Solarz rhetoric echoes the language of those who only the other day were trying to get a little help for the people who are trying to save the Nicaraguan revolution.

"Opponents of this initiative contend that the Cambodians will never be able to drive the Vietnamese out," writes the congressman, "and that our aid will only increase the suffering of the Cambodian people."

And this: "For America to refrain from assisting the forces of freedom in Cambodia would not end the resistance, but only diminish its prospects for success. It is not up to us to decide whether the Cambodian people will carry on their struggle for freedom and independence. The only question we face is whether to aid them in that effort."

Mr. Solarz and his liberal Democratic colleagues are even willing to kick in a little for the Afghan resistance, too. (Afghanistan's not in Central America, is it?) They're willing to call them "freedom fighters" and "resistance," anything to divert public attention from the festering, running sore in Central America.

This probably means Mr. Solarz won't win a Nobel Peace Prize this year, but who knows? He might persuade people that his colleagues aren't the swells and fools everybody takes them for.

*Wesley Pruden is managing editor of The Times.*